

Panel Proposal: New Approaches to Propertius: Myth and Politics

This panel explores aims to explore two prominent aspects of the Propertian corpus: his use of myth and his politics. This diverse yet coherent panel offers four papers that offer new perspectives to these elements of Propertius' poetry, perspectives that have implications not only for understanding not only Propertius' work, but also the poetry of the larger Augustan period.

Panelist #1 draws from the work of theorist Alenka Zupancic, who argues that gendered ideology, seen throughout Augustan poetry, creates a "split" between men and women, a split that leads to a social antagonism, which gendered ideology must then repress in order to create a harmonious cohesion under masculine authority. The panelist applies Zupancic's theory to the gendered social antagonism present in Propertius' lover-beloved dynamic, and the conflicts between Aeneas and Dido in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Through a careful study of the two poets' uses of the words *lex* and *pax* in these male-female relationships, the panelist argues that while Vergil reinscribes patriarchal gendered social order, Propertius challenges it.

Panelist #2 investigates Propertius' literary admiration for Vergil, building on recent attention to Propertius' reception of Vergil in his work (Janan, DeBrohun, Welch, Hutchinson 2006, Fedeli *et al.* 2015). This paper exposes the Vergilian resonances in Propertius 4.1, and points to them as laying the thematic groundwork for Book 4. In this paper, the panelist argues that Propertius' new occupation with aetiology and history arises not only from his admiration of Callimachus, but also is freshly occasioned by the advent of the *Aeneid*.

Panelist #3 relates Propertius' use of the myth of the Seven Against Thebes to a larger political program of discussing recent civil wars. The panelist argues that Propertius' invocation of the Seven represents a new mythical *topos* in the Latin poetic tradition, which he introduces in order to reflect the atrocities of civil war and Roman death. This paper imagines a new Propertian political program that is not merely anti-Augustan, but rather is informed by a greater sense of civic grief.

Panelist #4 argues that Propertius 2.8, 2.9, and 2.10, are meant to be read as a triad, and that by closely examining the mythical *exempla* in poems, the reader will see that the models employed by the speaker to represent his relationship with Cynthia ultimately do not hold up to scrutiny. The panelist argues that the failure of these mythical exempla signals that the poet's proclamation, in 2.10, that he will no longer compose poems about Cynthia is false, as is revealed by Cynthia's return in poem 2.13. This paper focuses on the way the poetic speaker's instability is revealed in this sequence of poems but notes that it also has larger implications for the coherence of Book 2, which some have argued is two separate books.

Panelist #3 will serve as presider. The papers will be 15 minutes long, with brief time for questions. A recognized expert in Roman elegy will give a short response to the panel and then conduct a general discussion.